

Mr. Chairman and committee members, thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Lane Schmitt. I am here on the behalf of the Montana State University Pre-Veterinary Club. At this time could I have all the members of the pre-vet club and supporters of the Montana Cooperative Veterinary program please stand... Thank you. I am currently a sophomore at MSU from Chinook, MT. I'm majoring in Animal Science with the plan of graduating in 3 years and going to Vet School. It's been my dream since I was three to become a veterinarian. I've been involved with agriculture my whole life and my dad is a veterinarian in Chinook and I plan to go back and take over the practice when I graduate.

Agriculture is the number one industry in this state and will continue to lead this state in the future. Veterinarians, especially rural, large animal veterinarians, are vital to agriculture's and this states success. There is definitely a shortage of large animal veterinarians and "more than 60% of those large animal veterinarians that are practicing have been in practice more than 20 years (Association)." It's easy to see that this shortage will soon increase do to retirement. The ranchers know and fear this and from personal experience the ranchers around Chinook are very grateful that I plan to go back and serve them. This is happening all over the state though and needs to be fixed.

The question I ask you is: Who better than rural Montana kids, like myself, based in Agriculture, to replenish the vet shortage in Montana? That is what this cooperative veterinary program is about. It's going to take Montanans to solve Montana's problems and keep agriculture thriving in this state. I think this program will provide a direct pipeline to solving these problems. The recruitment of very capable farm and ranch kids from Montana will ensure that they will go back and serve in rural Montana. This will keep money, kids, jobs, and resources in Montana. It's going to be a very good program for Montana State as well. Enrollment in the college of Agriculture and the pre-veterinary program will increase from both in state and out of state students due to the accreditation of this program. Also if this program is started, I think more capable students from rural backgrounds will look to veterinary medicine instead of engineering or other majors because of the reduced stress of knowing they have a better chance to be admitted to vet school.

In final, I would like to see this program passed not for myself, but for all pre-vet students, MSU, the entire state of Montana, and the agriculture industry as a whole. I believe I am the prototypical student who will be admitted to this program and I can see students like myself leading veterinary medicine, agriculture, and communities in Montana in the near future with use of this program.

## Bibliography

Association, American Veterinary Medical. *American Veterinary Medical Association*. 2013. 14 November 2012.